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THE  
IMMORALITY  
OF THE  
English Pulpit,

AS  
Justly Subjected to the Notice of the  
ENGLISH STAGE,

AS  
The Immorality of the STAGE is  
to that of the PULPIT.

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In a LETTER to Mr. Collier.

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Occasion'd by the Third Chapter of his Book,  
Entitl'd, *A Short View of the Immorality of the  
English Stage, &c.*

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. L O N D O N:  
Printed in the Year MDCXC VIII.



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A Word to Mr. Collier, by way of  
EPISTLE, concerning his Short  
(sighted) View of *the Immoralities*  
of *the English Stage*, &c.

S I R,

**T**HAT the Licentiousness of the Stage  
should ask the Correction of your Pen, is  
a sad and manifold Confession of the De-  
generacy of the Times, and withal shews the pres-  
singness of the Occasion. What else could provoke  
a man to write against himself? For 'tis to your  
dear Times that we owe the vileness of the Theatre;  
Those very Loose Times, to the Protector whereof  
you are so constant a Devotee; so that in the Cause  
depending you are both Plaintiff and Defendant.  
And though you may chance to win the Saddle, yet  
you can't but lose the Horse and go within a  
hair's-breadth of making an Ass of your self.

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**T**H A T a Parson ( Cashier'd for Misbehaviour ) should devote his Idleness to the Reading of Plays is no strange Matter ; but that such an one should snarl over his beloved Diet , is remarkably Currish ; however not at all beside his Character. But though he lets us understand he has still the same Faculties about him ; yet he wisely informs us at the same time that he has alter'd his Object, and left off his fruitless Barking at the *Moon above* him, for the sake of a *Cynthia*, that may be brought *under*. And indeed he has wrestled notably with the bright Dame of the Stage ; whom that he might enjoy more safely, he endeavours to strip naked of Applause, and so preserve her from being Clapt by any one but himself. A notable piece of Christianity , and becoming the Piety and Policy of the Party ! *But the Stage is Corrupted , ill Humours are Predominant, and something must be Administred to curb these Excesses.* Very good ; but must a Parson needs step out of the huge Throng of Quacks, clap on the Spectacles , and apply the Glisters-pipe , purely to discover his Knowledge in *Fundamentals* ? No, no, there is something more in it than all this comes to, or else the Stage might e'en have perish'd or prosper'd under its *Immodesty , Prophaneness , Immorality , &c.*  
for

for him : And a Thousand *Sebastians*, *King Arthurs*, *Donquixots*, and *Relapses* might have Club'd their Impudence to Hoot Virtue out of the World, had they but deported themselves as they should have done to a man in his Garb ; then should they never have been confronted with, and brought to receive Sentence from the Ancient *Pagans*, the *State*, or the *Church*. Nor had all those *Hydra Heads* mention'd in his *Contents* ever been discover'd or brought to the Correction of his *Chopping-knife*.

But they are rightly served, they must be peeping, forsooth, into the Pleats of the *Gown*, and presume to look Vermin upon Sacred *Cloth* ; ay, and to search for Petticoats under the Cassock. Now, wou'd any Parson alive, think ye, have patience to endure this Operation, and not rather have a Louse graze all its life upon his Gleab, than to undergo the pinch of having it knack'd, which causes more pains than a Twelvemonth's biting ? But you'll say it is foolish on both sides to quarrel about a Match of Louse-hunting, especially considering how fatal the Consequences may be to both ; for Mr. Ray has an old Proverb (but of daily use) that *when some sort of folks fall out, a better sort may chance to bear of their own again*. So that, in my opinion, they had better a draw'd back their stakes before

fore it had come to this ; for to have the Artillery of the Church drawn out in Order of Battle, charged with Anathema's and Excommunications ; ramm'd down with the Papers of Ancient Writers, and Modern Rehearers ; primed with combustible Ambition, and then fired with red-hot Passion, must needs make a confounded Clatter against the Deal-boards of a Stage, and give the Alarm to the *Honest World to shift for it self*, and then those two topping Vocations would be worse than *Silk-weaving*.

'Tis to be confels'd, the Stage is grown as Corrupt and Immoral, as the Pulpit can be for the Life on't ; and I see no reason why Mr. Collier may not, if he pleases, return them a *Rowland* for their *Oliver* ; I frankly agree, that most of his Charge against them is just, undeniable, and well seconded with Proofs. But I must beg his pardon, if it be an Affront to tell him, that his Hat hung in his Light when he wrote that *Chapter*, wherein he accuses the Stage as *guilty of abusing the Clergy*. For he has not been so kind as to shew one Instance wherein they are abused, but on the contrary, has cited several Historical Passages, Translated by the Poets indeed into Verse, but taken Originally from the Works of his own Party, as may too easily be made appear ;

pear ; nay, I durst engage my self to accommodate every accused Passage with a warrantable Text. Now, certainly if the Stage has any business in the World, it is to ridicule Vice with all the Powers of Wit, to expose the chief Patrons of it ; to lay open the Hypocrite to the common View of the World, and to dawb his outside of the same Colour as within. It is the Office of the Stage to detect the *Roguery*, as well as the *Folly* of a *Knave* ; and if such a one creeps into the Pulpit, 'tis their Concern to cry *Ware shins* to the gaping Auditory, lest whilst he is drawing their Eyes towards the Pulpit-Roof, he should let them unawares through a Trap-door into Hell. A wicked Parson is the most potent Villain upon Earth ; he not only abuses a *Man*, but a *World*, and endeavours to put the Cheat upon God himself. Whilst he chews the Gospel in his Mouth, he infects it, and makes a deadly Poyson of the *Bread of Life*, which he spits out upon the Congregation, because it agrees not with his own Palate. And yet *Roguery* of this fatal kind is not extensive nor general enough, in Mr. Collier's opinion, to be taken notice of by the Stage. But I wou'd fain know what an Universal Rogue is, if this ben't his Character ? A *Lay-Rascal* has no such Capacity, he contents himself with some peculiar in the *Practick*, as the  
Cutting



Cutting a Purse, the Tricking a Client, the Killing a Patient, or, to go one degree further, the Buying at a great Rate a Copy of some Master in the Faculty, whereby the Author is encouraged to prosecute his Studies, and the Bookseller obliged for Interest sake to make him as many Profelytes as he can. This is indeed the perfection of Mechanick Roguery, and Knave and Fool well mixt. But, alas! these know nothing of the Theory, are not acquainted with the Sublimities of Vice, have not that advantageous View of the whole System, as those from the Pulpit have. And is the Stage blameable for making it their Business (upon all occasions) to unriddle the Mystery of Iniquity, and to Counter-plot them? Or is it more Criminal in the Stage to *Act* that in a *Play* which they *do* in *Earnest*? Or why should not that *Parson* make up a Character in a Comedy, and be personated by a *Player*, who personates a *Player* in the *Pulpit*, and interlopes upon the Stage, by turning the *Church* into a *Play-house*? Certainly it is but just Retaliation; and that *Parson* (tho' it were Mr. Collier) who appropriates the Lashes of the Stage to himself, or is offended at the Stage in this particular, is either an Abetter or a Partaker of the Vices of the Clergy, and so most justly subjected to the Notice of the *English Stage*.

F I N I S.